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## Un/learning Habituation of Body-Mind Binary through the Teaching/Learning Body/Mind

Jeong-eun Rhee, Stephanie L. Curley, and Sharon Subreenduth

*The Black presence ruins the representative narrative of Western personhood: its past tethered to treacherous stereotypes of primitivism and degeneracy will not produce a history of civil progress, a space for the Socius; its present, dismembered and dislocated, will not contain the image of identity that is questioned in the dialectic of mind/body and resolved in the epistemology of 'appearance and reality.' The White man's eyes break up the Black man's body and in that act of epistemic violence its own frame of reference is transgressed, its field of vision disturbed.*

—Homi Bhabha's 1986 Forward to Franz Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask*.

### Prelude

**I**t seems strange, at first, that we still have to talk about our bodies in 2018, but as José Esteban Muñoz writes “there is no . . . teleological end . . . for mourning” (74). Our colored bodies, our gendered, sexualized, and marked bodies carry and perform such deep histories and biologies that we do not even know we have, that always remind (white/male) bodies of whiteness as violence and thus interrupt the familiarity and normalcy of the white/men's world. Our bodies, not to be too visible, as our too-visible presence is a threat, unless our bodies are to be used to serve, embellish, and entertain, all integrated into what is familiar: the governing technology of inclusion, diversity, and respectability. In these ways, our bodies are objects of matter, objects that resist and perform, objects of aesthetic-body-capital (Moten). Yet, the unruly presence of our differently colored bodies scream without sound that there are so many stories and realities that cannot be told, both individually and collectively, both consciously and unconsciously, in this world.

If “The Black presence ruins the representative narrative of Western personhood,” our bodies shame and break Western personhood—mind/bodies of what/who is, has been, and can become human. However, current theorizing around post-humanism often seems to fail to re/member that bodies of color have never been considered modern (Latour) or fully human and that scholars of color often have had to think with a kind of ‘post-human’ or ‘more-than-human’ perspective well before these terms became salient in discourses of academic research. We sometimes wonder if/how what has become ‘new materialism’ (Dolphijn and Van der Tuin) and/or ‘post-human’ in the anthropocene (Colebrook) or capitalocene (Haraway and Kenney) needs differently colored bodies’ onto-epistemologies—difference that so often detranscendentalizes the Western/Eurocentric ‘human’ (Spivak; Ahmed). What

is new in such appropriation and erasure of us?<sup>1</sup> This is why before we ask, “What/Who can be good teaching/teacher?” we attempt to neither “maintain an abstract notion of universal humanity nor the abstract particularity of a racial or gendered other . . . [but to resist] the concrete effects [the materiality, of these abstractions that] . . . exclude the ensemble” (Moten 135). What we want to open here is not simply the possibility of another pedagogical voice or story about learning that may be consumed, co-opted, unheard (Spivak) or ontologically inaccessible (Moten), but rather the question of both the otherness and “generativity of philosophical questioning that inheres in the exclusionary fragmentation of totality” (Moten 135). What we try to open here in questioning difference and repetition in interpretation is the possibility that not only do objects resist but they improvise (Moten).

A differently colored body breaks and makes ontological entanglements. Truncated bodies still carry or remember our ancestors’ stories that could not have been told during their time; our mothers’ stories that had to be burnt with their bodies in their land; and our sisters’ stories that grab our bodies to “re/member” (Rhee, *Re/membering* 597) that we belong to each other. This is why our bodies terrify white/men’s (and women’s) heterosexual able-bodied world as our presence is our collective re/membering of unknown, repressed, and unconscious materiality of mourning and disrupts the orders, normalcy, and familiarity—the ocular-centrism—of what is. The white eye/I breaks up colored bodies and in that act of epistemic violence, its frame of reference and vision are disturbed. One hypothesis to help explain the allegedly new “ontological-turn” is that white bodies begin to feel/notice epistemic violence (or onto-epistemology). Ultimately, as ontology is obscured, what breaks up is such pretense of (fixed, unified, white) ontology—meaning an onto-epistemology of being/becoming human that obscures continuity in its cuts and desires to differ and divide.<sup>2</sup> Thus our bodies are trun-

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1. We try to work here not oppositionally, but appositionally (Moten) to new materialism. We readily admit that it is not easy to figure out one’s complicity in repetition given the difficulty in relying on conscious and deliberate reflection to intervene in one’s onto-epistemology (Moten, 300). When we understand ontological accessibility shapes epistemic vision, “...then it is not difficult to understand the impulse to ascribe to such work the magical power to ‘generate its own energy,’ introduce itself to one, garner its own audience and market value, [become new], and so on. For nearly all objects of consideration can be experienced as animatedly and aggressively intrusive if one’s intellectual [or onto-epistemological] range is sufficiently solipsistic” (Moten, 300 citing Adrian Piper’s “Critical Hegemony and Aesthetic Acculturation,” *Notes* 19.1 (1985): 29-10). As what’s in one’s range shapes efforts to expand it, what becomes may be more harmony, than a widening cacophony; broadening range is not easily done. See also Watts, but before reading Rosiek and Kinslow, who in fairness bring together disparate theorizing on the agency of whiteness (or anti-blackness), why not read Moten on the agency of blackness? The first two lines of Moten’s *In the Break* resonate: “The history of blackness is testament to the fact that objects can and do resist. Blackness—the extended movement of a specific upheaval, an ongoing irruption that *anarranges* every line—is a strain that pressures the assumption of the equivalence of personhood and subjectivity (emphasis ours). Moten understands “race, class, gender, and sexuality as the materiality of social identity” (263).

2. While we come to this through different means (See, for example, Daza’s 2013 discussion of Spivakian reproductive heteronormativity and Curley, Rhee, Subedi, and Subreenduth’s 2017 discussion of Spivak’s ‘subject as planetary accident’), readers may be interested to know (that we know) that Deleuze and Guattari and Colebrook and Barad make similar points.

*cated stories—disidentification (Muñoz), not representation, and ambivalence, mourning, and agentic, when melancholia is depathologised (Mercer and Julien; Muñoz).*

## Introduction

In this continuing history of onto-epistemological violence, we write this paper to discuss how Eurocentric epistemology has insisted and normalized the separation between ontology (being and reality) and epistemology (how and what we know) in teaching and learning. To do this, we examine how the teaching and learning body itself is a relational assemblage shaped through bodily interactions (with mind as/in self-world-other) of both teachers and students' onto-epistemologies. In particular, we continue to interweave interludes of embodied data, memories, and analyses to form a conceptual discussion based on empirical re/searches of the following: (1) violence of education as/in becoming human (2) making visible biosociality in teaching and learning (3) violence of inclusivity, and (4) teaching/learning biosocial(ly). These interludes are not meant to be readable narratives but to incite and provoke how readers engage our discussion.

As transnational women-of-color pedagogues, we have always engaged with onto-epistemological—or corporeal—pedagogies. However, in doing this, we alert readers that we do not confine ourselves in the traditional boundary of the classroom and/or pedagogy while we present our discussion as corporeal pedagogical issues. Because we reject the classical/learned conception and distinction of ontology and epistemology, we also reject such divisions and discontinuities of classrooms and pedagogical issues.

Instead, we explore how the concept of the self (i.e., “I”) does not simply rest in the body of a human as a human trait (that can necessarily be phenomenologically observed) or a *knowing subject* that has agency and autonomy to either act alone or control the whole, but rather is a complex interconnected assemblage immanent with other complex systems and power dynamics in a larger ecosystem. Thus, in an effort to work before and beyond Enlightenment thinking (to detranscendentalize who we think we are), our contribution has implications for complicating the re/turn to ontology, materialisms, and bodies that is gaining popularity in research/methodology across fields, if we notice how processes of *re/turn* and *popularity* are also complex systems that cannot get out of themselves (discussed further below; see also note 1).

As transnational women of color, we (must) join conversations (scholar/ships) that we are not invited to (but might be about us—as difference); we (must) read literatures that often do not engage scholar/ships key to us; and we (must) become different scholar/ships, even at the loss/cost of our mind/body.<sup>3</sup> Often our mind/body asks us why and dares us not to continue. Yet, we do.<sup>4</sup> We work in this article to begin to entangle scholar/ships we think we know with what is becoming our field, particularly

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3. These manifest in so many different ways, including citation politics (Ahmed). Another example is when all white panelists discuss racial issues, or theorists/writers of color, such as Sylvia Wynter, without inviting or really citing scholars of color who also do this work. A recent case is a philosophy journal that devoted 60 pages to Black Lives Matter without including a black author.

4. For academic women of color's experiences in the context of North American higher education, see also James and Farmer; Wagner, et al; Gutierrez y Muhs et al.

work in biosocial, new material, and posthuman scholar/ships in allegedly new interests in corporeality.

### Unlearning habituation of body-mind through differently colored body/mind

By body/mind, we mean ontology and epistemology together vis-a-vis Gregory Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. At the same time, this body/mind is not independent from its environment (Shaw). In this way, behavior for any system or organism is biosocial—involves body/mind as an assemblage immanent to systems of information exchange including history, places, and processes. In this way, people have never been human and people are more than human, and theorizing becoming-human has a Western ontology.<sup>5</sup> In the simplest sense, one's mind, body, self, and behavior is interconnected to or, in fact, exists in relation with (because of) another's mind, body, and behavior through systems of information exchange including histories, places, and processes. While all of these are material realities or agentic matters, they also are always on the move (Childers).

#### Interlude I

*Even if an American-born third-generation white student in her 20s has no historical knowledge of the Korean War in the 1950s, through interacting with her Korean immigrant teacher whose body/mind remembers the history of imperial violences exerted by the US, Russia (the Soviet Union then) and China on her land, the student's mind/body now needs to respond to their expanded systems of information (even when such history is not explicitly shared). In a similar way, the teacher's body/mind also faces that larger system where the students see themselves as human selves—often as whites and in terms of nationality only (in this case American). In addition, although neither the teacher nor student's ancestors were directly involved with stealing the land from Indigenous peoples, that stolen land/place includes their body/mind interactions as body/mind/environment interactions (or biosocial), which actually takes place in such territories, not simply today's maps (Bateson; Willinsky).*

As Shaw writes, "Thus, the notion that the self rests in the body of a human and can either act alone or as master over its environment—that 'I' can do anything in a meaningful way—is, for Bateson, a 'pathology of epistemology'" (154). Although this is not a new idea (Spinoza; Bateson), we think it is fair to say that it has not been habituated in Westernized forms of education. While it has been theorized and increasingly is embraced by academic researchers in new theorizing trends across disciplines (e.g., as agentic realism by Karen Barad in theoretical physics; by Tia Denora in music sociology; by Jerry Rosiek and Kathy Kinslow in education, and so on), it is, to us, as both educators and educational academic journal editors, very much less evident in research practice or teaching and learning. Those trying to do this work confess how their attempts are shoehorned by habitualized mind/body present in academia (e.g., vis-a-vis funding schemes; peer review processes; research, publication, and institutional practices; expectations of students or research participants).

5. Here, we make a similar argument to Bruno Latour's 'we have never been modern.'

In addition, we also notice that at least in our review, albeit partial, much of this new scholarship remains Eurocentric, perhaps in spite of itself. Echoing Sara Ahmed (“Open Forum”), we question the politics of citation that appears to be practiced in the re/turn and recovery of material reason/reality, but also echoing Barad in Rich Dolphijn and Iris Van der Tuin’s interview and Kakali Bhattacharya, we work appositionally (Moten) not oppositionally. Whether put sophisticatedly (e.g., Ahmed; Van der Tuin) or crudely (e.g., Saldana), polemic and/or too narrow debates risk false binaries and mis/taken reductions. While the means of arriving can very well be a “difference that makes a difference” (Bateson, see also Barad), there can be little doubt that the salience of material/matter including corporeality, in academic research at least, is here (Freitas, Lupinacci, and Pais).

We acknowledge increasing interests and theorizing in the material/bodies after post-positivist epistemologies, but we wonder if the material has become more popular in education and social research as en-whitened mind/bodies, and particularly STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) bodies (of knowledge), become more concerned/aware of, and entangled in, material-social interdependence (possibly due to the political and neoliberal press in higher education and contemporary life)? For example, please watch a YouTube video clip until the very end of *What It’s Felt like since the Election*, written by J. Michael Feldman, and directed by Ian Alda. The reality that has been often obvious to many people of color becomes viscerally experienced by whites and suddenly it becomes a big deal. Let us also bring your attention to *The Slow Professor* by Maggie Berg and Barbara Seeber where the (white) authors discuss how important it is to pay attention to our embodied emotions and narratives at a biophysical level, yet, without any note on how “embodied” is also bio-socio-historical. So, the body of a slow professor in their book becomes universal and thus whitened. However, we do not disparage this potentiality for radical re/membering and re/minding body/mind. We value the notice of onto-epistemological connection, the re/turns to materialism, and trans-disciplinary approaches such as biosocial, in education. The points we are making here are that, while not homogenous, what becomes *new* in education may fail, despite good intentions/efforts, to ab-use<sup>6</sup> phenomenological and enlightenment-thinking about difference—perhaps because of the impossibility of noncomplicity (Daza, “Complicity as Infiltration”).

In the absence of discontinuities, change is not unidirectional but goes all ways. Put too simply, we enter academia and it changes us, even if we prefer it did not; at the same time, we (body/mind) infiltrate academia and change it, perhaps a lot less than we prefer. Sometimes we make too much of our intervention in order to not get kicked-out of this academia, and because of this we are habitualized to forget that education is a

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6. In “Putting Spivakian,” Daza writes “Ab-use” (604) is a term employed by Spivak that roughly translates “to use from below” but not be outside of; it is meant to convey more than simply “abuse” and to be distinct from other attempts to use the Enlightenment critically. According to Spivak, “the Latin prefix ‘ab’ says much more than ‘below,’ indicating both ‘motion away’ and ‘agency, point of origin,’ ‘supporting,’ as well as ‘the duties of slaves,’ [the ab-use of European Enlightenment] nicely captures the double bind of the postcolonial and the metropolitan migrant . . . the public sphere gains and the private sphere constraints of the Enlightenment” (3-4).

long-term project (Spivak; Bateson). For example, theorizing mind-body-environment together does not mean our habitualization into becoming human is magically somehow unlearned directly, once and for all. Habits take time. Complicity as infiltration is the possibility of change that is not teleological. Time and being cannot be unwound to some starting point; so, there is no origin/al state.

Unlearning habituation does not mean a blank slate or coming back to some earlier version, state, or body. Complicity is the possibility of change, not guarantee of a certain change. This is why we prefer appositional entanglements to oppositional polemics. As Colebrook writes, "What we should *not* do is try to retrieve or repair a proper human vision; nor should we think, too easily, that we have abandoned human myopia once and for all." (24). Any interventions that fail to reconceptualize *being human*, and even those that do, are often re-co-opted back into modern conceptions and overrepresentations of *being human* (Wynter) for various reasons, including over-indulgence of the eye/I (Daza and Gershon; Colebrook). As the mis/over/representation of difference, as race, etc., has been used to bring Self, World and Other into being, it cannot be easily disentangled from *being human*, and is, therefore, a biosocial problematic that may help explain why scholar/ships are feedback loops (Bateson) with variations on paths/theories of a Self before, beyond, or not of the onto-epistemological mind/body split, and why bodies matter in becoming re(dis)connected (or even extinct vis-a-vis Colebrook). Herein lies the ethical dilemmas and cautions of trying to do materialism, biosocial or corporeal, outside the Enlightened educated human, especially around difference and race/ism (e.g., Gabbidon and Green).

Such discussion may be particularly relevant for the readership of *The Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning* (AEPL) as AEPL is an official NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) assembly, and thus, we note the significance of a corporeal intervention in English. While the content area of English is often contested and cannot be rigidly defined, we posit that it becomes English through (neo)colonial, modern, and Eurocentric understandings of *becoming human*.

What we bring to the conversation is how scholars/ships of postcolonial studies and Othered bodies/known, such as ethnic studies, disability studies, and queer studies need not be reminded to re/member that neither the mind nor discourse can be separated from the body as our bodies are both socially *and* materially constituted. Embodiment for various (often Indigenous) onto-epistemologies even add a dimension of spirituality (Dillard; Rhee and Subedi). Drawing from our own teaching re/searches and higher education interactions as connected to societal dynamics, therefore, our response to the journal's call for reengaging corporal pedagogies becomes a testimonial of its long existence and wide practice in higher education (Ahmed; Anzaldúa; Darder; Dillard; hooks; Trinh), rather than a new/different analysis.

### **Violence of Education as/in Becoming Human; Toward a Biosocial Subjectivity**

Education may have many guises and it may play out differently in different geographies, but often formal education is rooted in humanism, produced by Enlightenment/colonial ideas. Consequently, the production of the knowing/knowable subject (i.e., an educated subject) has a strong relationship with *becoming human*—developing, trans-

mitting, training, and educating what is/can be cognitive, social, political, moral/ethical, physical/biological, and so on (Daza et al.). This *becoming human* project, or the project of civilization, has served as the epistemological foundation of European colonialism. To become an educated human, in other words, one necessarily learns hierarchical violences that disconnect the biosocial and consequently the World-Self-Other. Remember the rhetoric of “To kill the Indian to save the child” (Alexie 35)? This notion, coined by Richard H. Pratt when he founded the Carlisle Indian Boarding School, meant civilizing American Indians through Christian conversion and European education (Blumenfeld).

What this means is that European colonialism has transformed world conditions into a particular biosocial. Consider how B. R. Belcourt writes of indigeneity as a zone of biological struggle and of how the reserve is something of a non-place calibrated by ‘affects’ under the sign of misery in the continuing history of colonialism (2). He writes, “Might biosocial trauma partly make up indigeneity’s racial terrain? For me, the biosocial is where biology’s politics are thinkable, where bodily production and statecraft meet, where sickness coheres as a racialized symptom of a world that is not good for most of us. The biosocial is where disease’s raciality takes shape” (2). Belcourt argues that “indigeneity and sickness are co-constitutive categories in a day and age where health is the biopolitical measure of a subject’s ability to adjust to structural pressures endemic to the affective of settler colonialism” (2).

We can also take together Bateson, Fanon, and Wynter and keep on with them to illuminate this point. For Wynter, Bateson and Fanon’s work:

. . . underlies the interlinked nature of what [she has] defined . . . as the Coloniality of Being! Power/Truth/Freedom, with the logical inference that one cannot ‘unsettle’ the ‘coloniality of power’ without a redescription of the human outside the terms of our present descriptive statement of the human . . . its overrepresentation (outside the terms of the ‘natural organism’ answer that we give to the question of the who and the what we are) . . . (268)

How do we unsettle the coloniality of power? How do we come up with a redescription of the human outside the present (over)representation?<sup>7</sup> How do we do our onto-epistemological (corporeal or mind/body/self/other/world) pedagogy in this coloniality of power? As Wynter explains, according to Bateson, in the same way our body tries to conserve its physiological and neurological system, a descriptive statement of the human, a correlated process exists at the level of the psyche or the soul. We have learned to learn how to become human, or in another word, what it means to be human. And colonial epistemology continues to dominate such descriptive statements.

To put it another way, not only is the descriptive statement of the psyche/soul determinant of the kind of higher-level learning that must take place, seeing that the indispensable function of each such system of learning must be, imperatively, to conserve that descriptive statement, but it is also determinant of the overall range of acquired know-how that is produced by the interactions of the wider society in which each individual finds itself, and as a society whose overall descriptive statement will necessarily be of the same general order as that of the individual, at the level of the psyche/soul. (Wynter 267)

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7. A broader discussion of ocularcentrism is beyond the scope of the article. See Daza and Gershon, 2015.



Wynter shows learning is biosocial habitualization. How does the differently colored body/mind then interact with, learn, and habituate in such sociality?

Wynter writes,

Fanon had then gone on to analyze the systemically negative representation of the Negro and of his African past that defined the curriculum of the French colonial school system of the Caribbean island of Martinique in which he had grown up (one in which, as he also notes, no Black counter voice had been allowed to exist), in order to reveal why, as a result of the structures of Bateson's system of learning designed to preserve the status quo, the Antillean Negro had indeed been socialized to be normally anti-Negro. Nor . . . was there anything arbitrary about this deliberate blocking out or disregard of a *Black* voice, of a positive Black self-conception. Rather this *blocking out* of a Black counter-voice was, and is itself defining of the way in which being human . . . dictates . . . Self, Other, and World . . . (268)

What has defined the curriculum of our school systems over the last hundred years? What has been blocked out? And why do we/you think y/our teaching and learning escapes or even overcomes such blocking out? In this sense, discussing corporeal pedagogies simply as a material intervention or an insertion of westernized medical/biological/ physical terms of bodies misses so much historical, material, and collective violence (being) done in the name of education to our bodies/minds (and here we mean *body/mind* as an assemblage immanent to systems of information exchange including history, places and processes, as described above).

## *Interlude II*

*As we witness a series of killings of black and brown bodies not only in the U.S. but also across the globe, our bodies absorb sorrow, rage, despair, and loss. When we just began to write this piece:*

- *Tyre King, a 13-year-old boy, was shot and killed by police in Columbus Ohio, on September 14, 2016: "Shortly after, police say Tyre [barely 5 ft. tall, just shy of 100 lbs. at 13 years old] reached for a BB gun from his waistband. It was then Mason, a nine-year veteran of the Columbus police division, shot King multiple times"* (Felton, emphasis added).
- *Terrence Crutcher, a 40-year-old man was shot and killed by police in Tulsa, Oklahoma on September 16, 2016: "That looks like a bad dude, too,' the second officer said"* (Stack, emphasis added).
- *Keith Scott, a 43-year-old man, was shot and killed by police in Charlotte, North Carolina on September 20, 2016: "Officers said they saw Scott reach for his holster. The prosecutor rejected speculation, based in part on analysis of photos from the scene, that Scott was unarmed, saying that several officers saw the gun and it was recovered, with Scott's DNA, at the scene, although Murray [the district attorney] acknowledged that videos do not show the gun in Scott's hand"* (Graham emphasis added).

*What did these police officers see? Probably what Derick Wilson, who shot Michael Brown, an 18-year-old boy, in 2014 saw: "When I grabbed him . . . I felt like a five-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan [a six-foot-seven, three hundred-pound professional wrestler] . . . That's how big he felt and how small I felt"* (qtd in Clare 25).

*Now their bodies join with the specters of beaten, whipped, and dumped bodies that are with us. Does your body/mind see what Fredrick Douglass saw?*

*Before he (master) commenced whipping Aunt Hester, he took her into the kitchen, and stripped her from neck to waist, leaving her neck, shoulders, and back, entirely naked . . . calling her at the same time a d---d b----h. He made her get up on the stool, and tied her hands to the hook. She now stood fair for his infernal purpose . . . He then said to her, "Now you d---b b---h, I will learn you how to disobey my orders!" and after rolling up his sleeves, he commenced to lay on the heavy cowskin, and soon the warm, red blood (amid heart-rending shrieks from her, and horrid oaths from him) came dripping to the floor. (Douglas 29-30, emphasis added)*

*These black and brown bodies carry the history, remind us of the haunting presence of these specters, and demand mourning and re/membering. Yet the presence of these specters is a threat to the Eurocentric humanist project that divides between body and mind and between what appears and what is. Individual body/mind collapsed through centuries of racism silently testifies against a pathology of epistemology ('I can do anything in a meaningful way'). So what is biosocial? How about corporal pedagogy? When have we ever had a body-mind split?*

### **Making Visible Biosociality in Teaching and Learning**

What does it mean then for us to bring forth biosociality in teaching and learning? Un/learning 'becoming human' can help us notice our habitual ways of thinking and thus how being and thinking, habitualized through power-laden matter (derived from humanism and Enlightenment), goes on to generate us and our relationships with people and the world. In contrast, concepts are used widely in societal and educational (policy) practices, often in neutral, apolitical and ahistorical ways that erase, both intentionally and unintentionally, biosociality from which they emerge. In fact, ontology-epistemology separation still permeates every area and debate of education—from research, curricula, policy, testing, pedagogy, teaching, measurement, and evaluation, to standardization, accountability, etc. The problem with a narrow, standardized curriculum and testing, and tickbox list of *what works*, effective or *best practice*-ology, pedagogical strategies, and teaching evaluations is deeply onto-epistemological. However, both support and critique often fail to engage with how this so-called educational knowledge reproduces the old and allegedly new self-other ontological hierarchy. For example, how is biosociality affecting and affected by the practice of effective teaching strategies?

#### *Interlude III*

*A few weeks ago I was at an international film festival and happened to sit next to a colleague who teaches English. Ambah's film *Mariam* was part of the festival theme of "strong women," which focused on a young French Muslim woman who must decide between wearing a hijab or getting expelled from school during the 2012 French ruling where the hijab was banned in schools. This film asks: What if you had to choose between an education and your identity? As we chatted about the current political situation in relation to the film, my colleague asked if I read the book *Aya: Life in Yop City*, a novel that is loosely based on Marguerite Abouet's life and centers around 19-year old Aya, her friends, and their families in the Ivory Coast's working class suburb of Abidjan in the 1970s, and the personal/social challenges they faced. It is also an exploration of class and gender politics of the 1970s in Abidjan.*

*I asked my colleague how her students majoring in English react/respond to the inclusion*

*of such diverse texts in her classes. She is a light-skinned woman originally from India, and she inserts postcolonial analysis and readings into her class. She started with a chuckle and explained how students keep asking her and referencing the book as if it is taking place now—indicative of students' refusal to re-think Africa in contemporary times and their lack of valuing historicity and context. She quickly followed this up with an all too familiar response. Her class, like mine, is almost 100% white students, and she shared how her students actually state that they have learned a lot, yet her course evaluations are contradictory to their statements. Course evaluations include student feedback on what they have learned from the course content—here they give high praise for being introduced to postcolonial theory/thinking, difference, global themes and characters and how it has helped them become more critical thinkers.*

*Another question on the same course evaluation asks about the effectiveness of the course instructor—here she says students complain how they did not learn much or were not happy with the course in general, and they find multiple reasons to not feel satisfied. She turned to me and waved her hand—"how can they say they learned so much, yet say how ineffective I am as a teacher?" How were these students seeing a clear separation between the choice of book (content), pedagogy (teaching strategies), and the instructor (body/mind) and their learning? This instructor chose these texts driven by her own onto-epistemology—her embodied pedagogy—yet students separated content from body—praising content (book) and negating the instructor who taught it!*

*The above speaks to how bodies of color (in higher education) work through intersectionality and the power dynamics inherent in it. As Sara Ahmed notes, "feminism of color provides us with ways of thinking through power in terms of 'intersectionality,' to think about and through the points at which power relations meet. A body can be a meeting point. A concern with meeting points requires that we attend to the experiential: how we experience one category depends on how we inhabit others" (14). And to take this further—how others consume and inhabit us—as these students did.*

*A week later I am sitting in an annual review meeting for tenure and promotion and we have three candidates up for review—two US-born white females and one Korean-born female. As we review the Korean candidate a colleague brings up concerns: How do we know what the reputation of this Korean journal is? How do we know if it is a good journal, a real journal? Why isn't the paper translated into English—how do we know what the paper's focus is? The colleague insists that such a journal article cannot be counted if it is not in English, not considering that this candidate collaborates with Korean scholars. Further questions are raised about a small grant this candidate received from a Korean organization—again questioning the legitimacy of the funding source, going so far as to remark that it could be money from a relative. This questioning of legitimacy—based on location and race, despite the fact that all grant money is channeled through our institution's research and grants office—again shows that the starting point for our bodies, our work, is suspicion.*

Our bodies have been a constant, almost freakishly persistent, re/mind/er that we can never assume for ourselves what has been the normalized role of being a teacher/learner/reader/writer in higher education. Measurements of merit as well as student and peer evaluations claim to be fair because they encompass and support best practices and are inclusive of all criteria. Yet none consider the embodied implications of our work and the ways in which it is perceived and evaluated within the criteria. The interlude above

evidences this forced separation (with regards to student evaluation) and how bodies are used to work against our accomplishments (in the tenure and promotion review). As women of color, our embodied knowledge, embodied teaching, embodied interactions, and even embodied memory become our testimonials that epistemologies (what/how we know), contents (what we teach) and pedagogies (how we teach) become body matter(s). When have *we* ever said that our knowledge, emotion, and interaction with others and the world can be separated from our bodies? Yet we are forced to become and be evaluated across those binaries.

### Violence of Inclusivity: Persistent Allure of Becoming Human

In higher education we are also told that *we are all the same* or *we are all different but the same*. Interlude III speaks to this issue via the higher education evaluation process. It seems a simple move for inclusion and plurality, which appears to be a new (and thus better) thinking, and has become a new habit of thinking (Curley et al.).<sup>8</sup> Suddenly we find these elusive transcendentized politics of bodies. Different bodies do not matter. In this pretentiously inclusive model, we find a re/turn of an individual mind that can make a choice through free will. This model is what can make us the same: Eurocentric universal human rights and individualism based in humanism are reinscribed (Subedi 630). This model also serves well the neoliberal regime of a global capitalist economy, which some call “new imperialism,” in which becoming human means being consumers in a global market (Rhee, “International Education”; Tikly; Black 2010). An example is the consumption of educational research (e.g., digital self-promotion, obsession with rankings and metrics, competition for funding), even while many of us try to write collectively (such as this article), flatten authorship (Daza and Gershon) and acknowledge the impossibility of a ‘self/I’ who writes alone (Barad). This valorization of diversity that pretends to redress the existing unequal structures of differences such as race, gender, and disability, cunningly masks how it supports and rationalizes neoliberal (or new imperial) violence (Rhee, “Neoliberal Racial Project”). In this valorization, the binary between self and other is often indeterminate, economic, political, and cultural; inequality and discrimination continue based on new and old biosocial. Certain members of our planet are still and newly excluded and become disposable. We lose the ability to account for historical and structural matrices that allow the existence of such a self who is responsible only for one’s self. Individual freedom of choice, disguised as a tool for transcendentizing the biosocial, is in fact a neoliberal concept that plays a pivotal role in managing difference through subjectification, humanization, and dehumanization (Subreenduth, “Theorizing Social Justice”). These are the imperial entanglements of the biosocial (Barad; Yu).

#### Interlude IV

*Then we are being told over and over that our bodies do not matter. We are all human beings, so that our colored, gendered, and accented bodies do not make any differences. Suddenly all our embodied knowledge, embodied teaching, embodied interactions, and even embodied*

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8. For further discussion on this neoliberal multiculturalism, see Daza et al.; Rhee 2013; Ahmed; Subedi.

*memories are illegitimate, exaggerated, and illusory. This is how we can unlearn the self-other divide.*

*When one of my previous students posted a video on my Facebook site with a caption “Beautiful, I had tears!! You will love this,” my immediate reaction was “oh, crap. This did not happen.” My initial reaction was to the title of the video, “I am NOT Black, you are NOT White.” The video was a spoken word performance produced by Prince Ea, an African American rapper.*

*The timing of this post, July 9, 2016, was one element that I also need to contextualize before I discuss the video. My Facebook newsfeed was exploding with coverage on and reactions to the shootings of Alton Sterling on July 5, 2016 and Philando Castile on July 6, 2016. Both Sterling and Castile, black males, were shot to death by police officers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Falcon Heights, Minnesota, respectively. These shooting scenes were recorded on video and were widely circulating online. Then, on July 7, five police officers were fatally shot by an Army veteran during a Black Lives Matter protest in Dallas, Texas. Not surprisingly, there were sharp divisions in how people of different races (and ideologies) were feeling and making sense of these tragedies. This series of extreme violent acts was demanding the U.S. as a nation-state to remember previous victims, including Treyvon Martin, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, and Sandra Bland among other hundreds of the dead, and re-engage with issues of police killing, the Black Lives Matter movement, and racism.*

*As these were happening, the video my student posted on my Facebook page featured Ea’s song that calls out race and other socially constructed differences, such as gender, as labels. And thus, if we can get over these labels, we will be able to connect with each other in love. The video contains all differently colored bodies singing together in harmony.*

*Labels are not you and labels are not me  
Labels are just . . . labels  
But who we truly are is not . . . skin . . . deep  
See, when I drive my car, no one would ever confuse the car for . . . Me  
Well, when I drive my . . . body, why do you confuse me for my . . . body?  
It’s . . . my . . . body . . . get it? Not me*

*As if one’s body/mind exists in a vacuum of history, as if I/self can drive and rest in the body of a human and can either act alone or as master over its environment—that “I” can do anything in a meaningful way—the power of will and choice making. This is a habitual space where we denounce racial categories not racism; advocate for colorblindness, not racial justice or equity; embrace humanism—we are all the same (only if I can understand your mind)—without addressing dehumanizing aspects of being humans. Didn’t Bateson say this is a “pathology of epistemology” which causes us to overlook our connections to the broader environment?*

Even in this inclusive and pluralizing move with “*we are all the same or we are all different but the same*,” an individual (or independent) mind with a separable body from each other maintains the self-other divide and hierarchy. Grounded in such an ontological foundation, Eurocentric epistemology continuously limits and even prevents ways to know double or even multiple ontological be(com)ings in flux constituted by past-present-future self-other-world embodied interactions. Therefore, to think more interdepen-

dently and outside of salient regimes of truth requires a radically different way of being/ knowing that does not simply follow our usual habits of mind/body—of thinking, feeling, being, doing, and acting (Foucault; Spivak).

### Teaching/Learning Biosocial: Complicity and Contradictions

One way to put biosocial into teaching and learning is noticing complicity and double-binds, as a way of noticing habitual thinking/being, doing, and dividing (and possibly un-learning). Rather than trying to get away from complicity and contradictions, biosocial education embraces a more complicated sense of sense-making that is sense-em-bodied, implicit within which are unconscious/un-sensed biologic and somatic processes. Probably the mind/body becomes habitualized before we/self have/has a sense of sense. We can never fully grasp all within which we become, but we can ask “how is our sense of sense generated?” We accept learning happens and even if only sometimes and partially, we may notice how thinking, being, and imagining are habits of mind always on the move. In this way, if we want to change the future vis-à-vis education, we might best focus on the present (see Daza, “Putting Spivakian Theorizing to Work”).

#### *Interlude V<sup>9</sup>*

*Twenty undergraduate students filtered into a too small room with no windows for the first session of an introductory research course. Once they sat down (crammed behind desks), I asked them to think about what they actually do when they come into classrooms and what kinds of behaviors they had learned through their schooling, especially what they expect to have happen in the first session. Although all identified as women in their twenties, they had been schooled in geographically (nationally) diverse locations, and came from different religious, race-ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Many spoke two or more languages. In addition, they were part of a program cohort studying special education and had had coursework regarding differently abled students. Additionally, most of them reported having personal experiences (themselves or close family members) with special educational needs (e.g., dyslexia, ADHD, etc.) and many had work experience with diverse student populations.*

*Then, I asked them to share their thoughts aloud. Nobody spoke, but some students raised their hands. And I used “hand raising” in class as an example of habitualized behavior. I asked them to put their hands down and just talk. Moments of silence were broken when some students shared that they “come in and sit down” and “go over the syllabus.” I responded, “If you are able, be careful and stand on your desk.” Hesitation and moments of non-movement met the command, but eventual compliance ensued, which says something about teaching authority*

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9. Data in this interlude is drawn from a 2015-2016 CELT SOTL grant project entitled: *Exploring the Impact of Research as Pedagogy on University Strategic Initiatives to Enhance Student Experience, Employability and Internationalisation* <http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/sotl/1516/index.php>). I translate UK academic terminology to US norms, (e.g., “unit” has been changed to “course” and “unit specification” to “syllabus.” I have written about my different body differences elsewhere, Daza “Terra Incognita,” “Non-Innocence,” “Decolonizing Researcher Authority.” In the U.K., I am not White or Black or Brown. I am “American” (often a negative); my language especially is the subject of ridicule.

*that is not analyzed here. A lot of writing and talking about embodied teaching exists, but what is embodied or corporeal pedagogy if not somatic, even though writing and talking are also somatic? So, it's not that talking and reading are not embodied and do not change the world but so does living, doing, and moving. In the mind-body split of becoming human, these ways are dismembered in (Westernized) education.*

*Thus, sitting in a lecture is also corporeal, but we learn to learn through difference. So the class went on while we stood on desks. I told them we would go over the syllabus next session, and I asked students to think about how they felt. I asked them about the affective response they had coming in the classroom, not raising their hands, speaking out loud, and standing on, not sitting in, desks. Of all this, they seemed to push back the most on not reading the syllabus. The cohort had learned to expect the instructor to read over a PowerPoint version of the syllabus, as well as provide a hardcopy (a practice in tension with university policy to post on Moodle). I regularly referred to this session's "stand-on-desk" activity throughout the year, including when trying to explain how onto-epistemology entangle or generate research methodology. Drawing on Lather (200), the activity tries to act, study, feel, show, and experience "paradigm shifts" rather than simply talk or read about them. The activity engaged and provoked students. In a British Education Studies Association (July 2016) presentation, Claire Osborne, who had been a student in the class, reported:*

*Starting the research module was mainly discussion and thought provoking... I was lucky that I had a tutor that was a little different, who would stand on a table in class to explain the context of the word paradigm. This made some of the difficult aspects less intimidating.*

*However, an anonymous student on the course evaluation (January 2016) suggested that students wanted: "To be informed about the assignment by the tutors in a coherent manner such as words, not acting it out."*

*Loving the irony of this double-bind, I was so happy when I read this comment as part of the course evaluation. While it could be mistaken as a pedagogical failure, it so nicely supports the overall thesis. Pedagogy is corporeal and somatic, not made so by me. Change may be possible, but the outcome is not guaranteed necessarily the same for different subjects (such as the students in this case) or even a difference that makes a difference. Thus, corporeal pedagogy generated the possibilities of un/learning somatic habituation, both difference and repetition. At the same time, Western/Enlightenment-think about the mind/body split continues to be pedagogy for many students (as well as educators).*

### **Closing/Another Opening**

The story never stops beginning or ending. It appears headless and bottomless for it is built on differences. Its (in)finitude subverts every notion of completeness and its frame remains a non-totalizable one. The differences it brings about are differences not only in structure, in the play of structures and of surfaces, but also in timbre and in silence. (Trinh 2).

Can a differently colored teaching and learning body/mind/object (see note 1) detranscendentalize Enlightenment-colonial-modern Eurocentric notions or fictions of becoming human—developing, transmitting, training, and educating what is/can be cognitive, social, political, moral/ethical, physical/biological (Curley et al.)? Yet, isn't

it always already happening? Aren't becoming beings themselves and their interactions with the world and other, including education, always already biosocial? While socio-cultural and biophysical interdependence means relationships and meanings always *on the move* (and this is evident everywhere if we look for it), it also, paradoxically, is hard to find on the whole, in mainstream public and academic domains, where often it seems there is one, best/right/real truth to be told or found (or maybe two sides to a story), and one or a few protagonists to do it, even if these selves are only made human.

What we have attempted in this essay is to engage with notions of biosocial—to evidence the ways in which bodies of color are biosocial to start with and engage the world and are engaged by the world. Objects that resist and improvise are agentic. Our collectively embodied interludes (toward multiple ontological be/comings) and engagement with multi-discipline scholars/hips demonstrate that our own efforts at biosocial—our own biosocial pedagogy and interactions with higher education and our students—are themselves complicit with habitualized understandings and performance of biosocial but at the same time working against and resisting—asking alternative questions, presenting differently othered bodies within mainstream frames and pushing to rethink how/what we know (Subreenduth 2008) .

Consequently, any attempts (including ours) to put biosocial to work in teaching and learning may be always already undermined by the habitualized mind/body that undergirds it (Spivak). Efforts are necessarily entangled and complicated by sense-making that emerges from who and where we are and can (or can't) be. Because we are always inside our own sense-making, it is difficult to see how we make sense and generate logic beyond habitualization. Unfortunately, many salient/learned forms of thinking-being-feeling-acting-doing-making are inherently hierarchical and insidiously laden with a humanism that actually dehumanizes—our Interludes evidence this dehumanization even in attempts at *human* and *difference* before/below Enlightenment versions.

Many (beloved) notions of teaching can be reread. For example, Parker Palmer's *Courage to Teach*: "A good teacher must stand where person and public meet, dealing with the thundering flow of traffic . . . as we try to connect ourselves and our subjects with our students, we make ourselves, as well as our subjects, vulnerable to indifference, judgement, and ridicule" (17).

Yes, we, all teachers, face this. However, when such discussion does not address how our marked bodies/minds already always carry, generate, and re/mind certain affects, histories, place and non-place in geographies and so on, "the thundering flow of traffic" can violently erase our embodied existence in the realm of teaching to highlight the trace of what experiences, issues, and topics are relevant, appropriate, and important. Some readers may (still) ask how are all the records of Black men shot and killed in Interlude II relevant for teaching? Therefore, as scholars of color, gaining (limited) access in higher education and some academic/pedagogical validation (by necessarily perpetrating wrong—or rather—white-headed ideas) comes at the cost of body-soul-mind (Dillard 40). We compromise and become strategically complicit to stay in Eurocentric academia. Consider Steven Salaita's case as an example of what happens if a colored body/mind overtly resists or asserts his onto-epistemological stance. Yes, the academy silences certain onto-epistemologies. Its absence (erases) creates. This absence/erasure may be what Judith Butler means by constitutive incommensurability: "Whenever we claim to



know and to present ourselves, we will fail in some ways that are nevertheless essential to who we are" (42). Or essential to survive in academia?

Perhaps, to notice these onto-epistemological dilemmas—violences—is education. In fact, as we write elsewhere (Curley et al.), this is Spivak's charge: "We must learn to do violence to the epistemological difference and remember that this is what education 'is'" (10). This violence is the allegedly new ontological-turn. Keeping with Bateson, we learn to learn; so thinking, being, and acting is not neutral, ahistorical, linear, or simply natural—but learned and in all that is also how we learn. In this same way, we cannot simply, linearly, or completely un-learn who we are, where and when we live, or how we think post-Enlightenment (or post-humanism). Let us learn from why the "post" in post-colonial is not after colonialism but "a reminder of continuously changing, adapting, persistent colonial and neocolonial structures and relations that have chained all of us" (Rhee and Subedi 342). So, we continue to teach, or learn to learn, with our onto-epistemological pedagogies, to displace Enlightenment and (post)critical understandings of objects, subjects, agents, history and critique to re/member or imagine a kind of being human before, below, or beyond Enlightenment dictated humanism without a nostalgic return (Spivak; Swanton; Saldana).



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